

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SCCT-01 EB-07 IO-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 FEA-01 OES-03

/088 W

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R 121340Z MAR 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3879

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0238

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ENRG ET

SUBJECT: TRANSPORTATION, FUEL, AND CONVOY ESCORTS

REF: ASMARA 228 (DTG 101400Z MAR 76)

1. FOR THE FOURTH DAY THERE WERE NO PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AVAILABLE FOR SALE IN ASMARA. THIS WAS DUE TO DISRUPTION OF FUEL CONVOYS BETWEEN ASMARA AND MASSAWA, AND NOT LACK OF FUEL AVAILABILITY. DURING AFTERNOON OF MARCH 11, ESCORT TROOPS ATTACHED TO CONVOY FROM DECAMERE WITH SILICONE SAND FOR GLASS FACTORY (SEE REFTTEL) RETURNED TO TOWN, AND WERE ASSIGNED MORNING OF MARCH 12 TO ESCORT WAITING EMPTY FUEL TRUCKS TO MASSAWA.

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FUEL TRUCKS ARE EXPECTED TO RETURN SATURDAY, AND GASOLINE

SHOULD BE FOR SALE AGAIN ON MONDAY, MARCH 15.

2. ON EVENING MARCH 11, RADIO ASMARA ANNOUNCED THAT EPMG WILL PERMIT INTERCITY BUSES TO RESUME OPERATIONS AS OF MARCH 13. ANNOUNCEMENT STATED THAT THERE WILL BE STRICT CONTROL ON THIS TRAVEL AND THAT ALL PERSONS OVER 13 YEARS OF AGE MUST BE IN POSSESSION OF VALID ID CARD. BUSES WILL TRAVEL WITHOUT ESCORT, BUT WOULD BE SUBJECT TO SEARCH AT ANY POINT BY EPMG FORCES. ANNOUNCEMENT STATED FURTHER THAT EPMG AUTHORITIES HAD AGAIN REVIEWED EASING ON BAN OF MOTORCYCLES, MOTORBIKES, AND BICYCLES, AND HAD DECIDED THAT THIS WAS NOT YET THE TIME TO PERMIT THEIR USE IN ASMARA.

3. COMMENT: IT IS STRIKING TO REALIZE THAT MASSAWA FUEL CONVOY COULD BE HELD FOR ONE WEEK IN ASMARA BECAUSE OF LACK OF WILLING AND/OR AVAILABLE ESCORT FORCES. WITH REINFORCEMENT BY "FATHER FIGHTERS" REPORTED TO BE EIGHT BATTALIONS (APPROXIMATELY 4,000 MEN) TO ERITREA, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT LACK OF SUFFICIENT ESCORT FORCES IS RESULT OF WIDESPREAD EPMG MILITARY COMMITMENTS IN OTHER AREAS OF ERITREA. EASING OF RESTRICTIONS ON INTERCITY BUS SERVICE SEEN AS CLEAR CONCILIATORY STEP IN EFFORT TO RETURN DEGREE OF NORMALITY TO ERITREA. EPMG MUST BE AWARE THAT THIS MEASURE WILL AFFORD INSURGENTS HEIGHTENED DEGREE OF MOBILITY, YET AUTHORITIES ARE PREPARED ACCEPT THIS LIABILITY IN RETURN FOR APPEARANCE OF CONCILIATION.
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